

Position Title:

Commissioner of Higher Education, State of Missouri

Principal Accountability:

The Commissioner is responsible for contributing to, coordinating and leading initiatives to accomplish the Vision and Mission of the Missouri Department of Higher Education. This includes a strong advocacy role for higher education, with the context of balancing the needs and priorities of a variety of constituents, including:

- Academic institutions
- The Missouri Legislature, the Governor's office, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Department of Economic Development and other governmental bodies
- Communities, chambers of commerce and business entities throughout the state
- Students, parents and other concerned parties
- DHE leadership and staff

The Commissioner works to assure needs are met according to cost, time and quality objectives.

Scope of Role:

The Commissioner reports to the Chair of the Board, Coordinating Board for Higher Education

Directly reporting to the Commissioner are:

- Director, Educational Policy, Planning and Improvement Center
- Director, Communications and Customer Assistance
- Director, Information Technology
- Deputy Commissioner, Fiscal, Legislative and Administration Group
- Associate Commissioner, Academic Affairs
- Director, Missouri Student Loan Group
- Assistant Commissioner and General Counsel, Contracts and Compliance
- Director, Financial Assistance and Outreach Group

Total staff encompasses 70 FTE and budgetary oversight for \$700 million in loan guarantees, \$45 million in financial aid programs, and a department operating budget of over \$1 million.

As part of the quality initiative, each group reporting to the Commissioner has developed its mission statement, a scope of primary products and services, measures of success, and has structured the group so that individuals clearly understand their role and how those roles align with the group and DHE strategies.

Responsibilities:

1. *Strategic plan* – The Commissioner is responsible for working with the Coordinating Board and internal staff to develop the strategic plan, and to assure alignment with the principal goals and initiatives of the Plan. The Commissioner assures that progress on the goals is monitored; that barriers or problems are identified and resolved; and that the goals are achieved on time and within budget.
2. *Constituency Relationships* – A critical element of the Commissioner's role is constituency relationships. The Commissioner is effectively a *bridge builder* among constituents with potentially competing needs and priorities. The Commissioner must proactively develop positive, effective, credible relationships with academic institution leadership, the business community, legislators, the Governor's office, community leaders, other state departments such as DESE and DED, the Governor, the media, and a host of other interested parties in higher education.
3. *Program Development* – The Commissioner is ultimately responsible for assuring financial aid and other higher education programs are developed and administered according to stated policies and parameters, including associated reporting and performance guidelines.
4. *Policy Development* – The Commissioner directs and influences development of policy around areas such as Board priorities, including the measurement of value-added learning, teacher quality, and enhanced core curriculum; increased participation and success in postsecondary education; and performance excellence to assure policies align with legislative and department goals.
5. *Budget Coordination and Advocacy* – The Commissioner works with academic institutions regarding their annual operational and capital budget submittals to review and negotiate the scope of individual institutional budgets against the overall budget to assure that goals and budgets are aligned with state-defined and board policies. The Commissioner serves as an advocate on behalf of these academic institutions to assure needs are considered by the legislature.
6. *Financial/Information Technology Oversight* – The Commissioner oversees development of financial and information technology systems to assure proper reporting, prudent and accountable fiscal management, and optimized decision-making tools.
7. *Quality Implementation* – The Commissioner assures that the Board and DHE staff are educated about quality processes and structure; that each group or division has defined and aligned their function and purpose with the quality plan; and that performance improvement initiatives are prioritized and carried out according to plan goals.
8. *Selection, development, performance management and retention of people* – The Commissioner must attract, develop and retain employees who are quality-minded, achievement-oriented, and committed to achieving the mission and values of the organization. The Commissioner works with direct report leadership to devise performance management processes to assure expectations are clearly communicated and measured—assuring alignment of individual efforts with their group and broad organizational goals.

The Ideal Candidate will possess the following education, experience and interpersonal traits:

- Master's degree required, with doctorate highly desirable
- Strong ability to gain high, credible visibility throughout the state around a variety of higher education issues. Seen as a first point of contact around higher education needs and goals
- Is visionary regarding the educational and learning needs of the state constituency, including pre-kindergarten learning needs, elementary and secondary education, higher education and life-long adult learning and workforce development
- Proven record of developing and implementing strategic plans—able to translate plans into actions that achieve the goals of the organization
- Ability to work effectively and collaboratively with diverse constituents. Manages associated conflict and competing priorities in a diplomatic, non-defensive manner
- Broad-based experience in all aspects of managing an organization, including finance; information systems; program, service or business development; communications and media relations; and customer relations
- Has a successful record of working with legislative and governmental processes. Communicates in a highly effective manner with legislative and other elected officials
- Has been part of an organization that implemented an organizational transformation. Has a passion and focus on process improvement strategies. Effectively holds the operation accountable for achieving targeted outcomes and constituent satisfaction
- Strong record of selection, development, performance management and retention of effective, self-motivated staff

Interpersonal Attributes:

- Open and flexible
- A catalyst for change
- Curious—does not merely accept the status quo. Resourceful and creative
- People and relationship oriented
- Highly effective listener and communicator
- Influential and politically savvy
- Operates with strong integrity and ethics. Instills trust and honesty
- A great “salesperson” for higher education
- Knows how to instill accountability and commitment in others
- An energizer, mobilizer, and motivator. Unafraid to take appropriate risks
- Is innovative and forward-looking
- Is implementation-focused
- Manages conflict without becoming defensive or angry
- Self-reflective—knows strengths and weaknesses and self-manages effectively
- Maintains a sense of humor and optimism under pressure